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ART AND PROGRESS

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AMERICAN ART

One of the subjects of perennial interest is that of the influence of nationality upon art. More than once it has been brought as an impeachment against the art of America that it is not truly American, being largely borrowed from the art of other nations. Furthermore from time to time the patriotic cry is heard that it is the duty of Americans to patronize and encourage the art of our own people in order that it shall properly flourish and genuinely prosper.

In an essay read before the American Academy and National Institute of Arts and Letters and published in the *Outlook* of February 17th, Mr. Arthur Whiting, known both as a musician and musical critic, makes interesting references to these subjects with special regard to the art of music, but in a way equally applicable to the arts of painting, sculpture, architecture and the like. He says: "Great music is national, expressing the

temper and character of a nation. The most homogeneous people have produced the most characteristic art. The music of Germany is pure German; the music of Italy is the very essence of Italian minds; and even the most experimental and venturesome French composer never leaves Paris. The alleged absence of idiom in the language of the American composer is attributed by some to the fact that the national character of the citizens of these United States of America is not yet fixed; that it will acquire distinction of feature only after the many elements of race within these borders have been fused."

Mr. Whiting later calls attention to the fact that the American of today is unique. "He has," he says, "his own face, his own way of doing and of feeling things." And his conviction is that if the American's emotions have as yet no complete musical representation, it is not because they cannot be represented in tones, as we have one song at least, "Dixie," which "throbs exactly with the national pulse" according to his conviction.

Certainly this is equally true of American painting, sculpture and architecture. If the American of today is, as Mr. Whiting declares and as the majority of us know, unique, there is no reason why those arts which register American expression should be lacking in individuality, nor do we believe that they are. "We are proud," Mr. Whiting says, "to be able to say that we have men who have produced music with a flavor of its own—composers, whose European education has but intensified and confirmed their natural qualifications. That peculiar energy which marks the tune of 'Dixie' is native to them—an energy which is not out of place in large and dignified form. One hears from them a turn of phrase, a lilt and catch, which can be stamped 'Made in America' without mental reservation." Is not this equally true in the entire broad field of the fine arts?

Referring to the cultivation of art, Mr. Whiting makes these striking suggestions: "There has been much to-do recently over the alleged neglect of our composers by the public and by those high in authority. It is said that talent languishes for lack of recognition, and that therefore the country

should organize to the end that no genius remain undiscovered." . . .

"An enemy could hardly devise anything more humiliating to artists than this, or put the American composer in a more unhappy relation to his public. No one can rebuke so effectively these foolish friends of American art as the self-respecting composers themselves, and the blame rests with them that this grotesque movement has not been suppressed." . . .

"The healthful growth of our music has been retarded, standards have been misplaced, weak men have been given praise which should have been reserved for strong men, and all because certain irresponsible people have the power, by simply uttering two words, "unpatriotic" and "disloyal," to silence needful, strengthening, in the highest sense friendly, criticism.

"Question: Who are the friends of an artist? There can be but one answer, which is: Those who love art more than they love the artist."

Mr. Whiting ends his excellent thought-provoking essay with the following admonition: "And now, music laymen of the country who want to help the American composer, apply your energy to enriching the musical life of the nation; give every child the best music; advise students to compose, not to see how great their own powers are, but to measure and venerate true greatness. Take long views; do everything by years, and not by days. Then, when future generations have continued the labor of love you began, the American composer, expressing in music the very spirit of America, may be acclaimed by his happy countrymen."

To all those who are interested in the development of art in America, this carries a message of deep significance and one which we would at this time bring to the thoughtful consideration of all of the members of the American Federation of Arts and the readers of ART AND PROGRESS.

The Guild of Boston Artists is sending out to its associate members reproductions of a drawing by Frank W. Benson, "The Ducks." These are fine black and white facsimiles, each print approved and signed by the artist.

NOTES

UNUSUAL LECTURES AT THE METROPOLITAN MUSEUM

Two interesting lecture courses have been given this winter at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. One series consisted of illustrated lectures for salespeople, buyers and students of design, for which no tickets were required, and which were given in the Museum Lecture Hall, on Saturday evenings. The course, dealing with furniture and costumes, was concluded on March 6th by Miss Frances Morris's lecture on Lace. These illustrated lectures for salespeople were inaugurated last winter, and they are especially designed to meet their needs. Members of the staffs of several other museums cooperated in giving the lectures.

Another course of lectures, or more properly story telling, for the children of members of the Museum, has been given with great success. Miss Richter, of the staff of the Museum, gave the first talk on "Heroes and Monsters" before an interested audience of children. The other lectures were on "Toys of Long Ago," by Margaret Sawtelle; "Children on Canvas," by Edith R. Abbot; and "The Sculptor and his Clay," by Mrs. Herbert Adams. The last lecture will be given on March 27th, by Mrs. Agnes L. Vaughan, the subject being "Men of Iron." The response to the series has proved sufficiently enthusiastic to warrant repeating the course this season, and to indicate the desirability of holding a similar course another winter.

THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF GRAPHIC ARTS

The American Institute of Graphic Arts, which was formed a little over a year ago with Alexander W. Drake as its honorary President, is doing excellent work. At the monthly meeting of the Institute at the National Arts Club, New York, on the evening of February 19th, Mr. Henry Mayer, contributing editor of *Puck*, and Mr. Charles Dana Gibson, one of America's foremost illustrators, lead a discussion on "Illustrations."

Mr. Mayer, during his twenty-eight years as an illustrator, has developed a belief that the "man behind the line" is of real importance and not the line behind the